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STONE MOUNT AND CLASP FOR JEWELRY**BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION****I. Field of the Invention**

5 The present invention relates to jewelry. More specifically, the present invention provides a unique combination clasp and stone mounting for a bracelet, necklace or the like.

II. Description of the Related Art

10 Jewelry items have been made and worn for centuries. Bracelets and necklaces date back to ancient Egypt and even earlier. Jewelry items have been found throughout recorded history in virtually every culture and civilization.

15 Many different clasp arrangements have been used to join the opposite ends of a bracelet or necklace together after the jewelry item has been placed about the neck, wrist or ankle. Also, many different types of settings exist to permit a stone to be mounted to the bracelet or necklace. However, very few jewelry pieces incorporate
20 structure that constitutes both a part of a clasp and a mounting for a decorative stone.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

A first object of the present invention is to provide an improved clasp for jewelry items.

25 A second object of the present invention is to provide an improved clasp that also serves as a secure mount for a decorative stone.

30 Still another object of the present invention is to provide a secure mount that is open to the top and bottom so that the stone and interior of the mount can be easily cleaned.

These and other objects of the invention are achieved by providing a piece of jewelry that includes a

wire band having a clasp comprising a hook formed at one end of the band and a bezel connected to the other end of the band. The exterior of the bezel preferably has an hourglass shape so that it is wider at the top and bottom and narrower at the center. When the jewelry piece is wrapped about a body part such as the wrist or neck, the bezel is moved into the hook such that the hook engages the narrower center of the bezel. The wider top and bottom prevent the hook from slipping off the bezel.

Preferably the wire band has a spring characteristic between 5 and 7 dies hard. If the spring characteristic is less than 5 dies hard, the band will not maintain its shape and the hook will not be held with sufficient force to the hourglass-shaped bezel. If the spring characteristic is greater than 7, the wire band will be too brittle and crack due to metal fatigue over time.

The bezel preferably has an interior lumen that extends the entire length of the bezel. The top and bottom of the bezel are both preferably open to the lumen. The wall of the lumen preferably includes a seat upon which a decorative stone may be mounted. A plurality of notches or recesses can also be provided. These notches receive stone setting beads to secure the stone in place. Since both ends of the bezel are open to the lumen, the lumen (as well as the top and bottom of the stone) can easily be cleaned.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Figure 1 is a perspective view of a jewelry piece incorporating the present invention.

Figure 2 is a perspective view showing the bezel soldered to one end of a wire band.

Figure 3 is a cross-section of the bezel.

Figure 4 is a cross-section of the bezel showing a

stone mounted in the lumen.

Figures 5A-5C show how a hook at one end of the wire band is secured to the bezel attached to the other end of the wire band.

5 **DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF A PREFERRED EMBODIMENT**

Figure 1 shows a jewelry piece 1. The jewelry piece includes a metal wire band 2. Formed at one end of the wire band 2 is a hook 3. The opposite end of the wire band 2 is joined to a bezel 4. The joint 5 between the
10 wire band 2 and the bezel 4 is preferably a solder joint. The wire band has certain spring characteristics. Preferably the metal of the wire band 2 is between approximately 5 and 7 dies hard to give the metal sufficient spring characteristics without being too
15 brittle.

As shown in Figure 2-4, the bezel 4 is elongated. The bezel 4 has an exterior wall 10 having a top section 12, a center section 14 and a lower section 16. The joint 5 between the band 2 and the bezel 4 is located at
20 the lower section 16 of the bezel 4.

The upper section 12 and the lower section 16 have generally cylindrical shapes. The center section 14 provides a recessed area. As such, the exterior wall 10 of the bezel 4 is shown as having an hour-glass shape.
25 Other shapes can also be used without deviating from the invention so long as the exterior wall has a recessed area.

The bezel 4 has a top opening 20 and a bottom opening 22. Extending between openings 20 and 22 is a
30 lumen 24 having a lumen wall 26. The lumen wall 26 is generally cylindrical in shape.

Associated with the top of the lumen 24 is a frusto-conical seat 30. The lumen wall 26 also has a pair of

recesses 32 above the seat 30. Figure 4 shows a stone 34 placed within the lumen 24 and resting on the seat 30. Also shown are a pair of seat beads 36 inserted into the recesses 32 to secure the stone 34 in place in the bezel 4. The edges of the stone 34 are, in essence, pinched between the seat 30 and the seat beads 36. The stone 34 and lumen 24 of the bezel 4 can be easily cleaned because of the top and bottom openings 20 and 22.

The design of bezel 4 is particularly advantageous because it permits a stone mounted to the bezel 4 to be easily cleaned. During the course of wearing jewelry, water, perfume, lotion, body oils, dirt and other grime can seep through the top into the back of a standard bezel causing the stone to have a dark or cloudy appearance. No manner of cleaning, soaking, boiling, ultrasonic cleaning or steaming can remove such deposits once they have penetrated into a standard closed-base bezel. The design of bezel 4 solves these problems and permits the bezel 4 and stone 34 to be cleaned in a variety of ways restoring the original beauty of the stone.

As shown in Figure 1 and further demonstrated by Figures 5A-5C, the bezel 4 and the hook 3 cooperate to provide a clasp joining the two ends of the jewelry piece 1 together. The hook 3 is pushed past the bezel 4 and the opening of the hook 3 then receives the center section 14 of the bezel 4. The wider top section 12 and the lower section 16 prevent the hook 3 from moving up and down across the outer surface of the bezel past the top or bottom of the bezel 4. The spring characteristics of the metal wire band 2 hold the inside of the hook 3 tightly against the center section of the bezel 4 to secure the two ends together so the jewelry piece 1 can

be worn. To disconnect the hook 3 from the bezel 4, all one needs to do is provide sufficient force to overcome the spring force of the wire band 2 so the hook 3 and bezel 4 are freed from each other. Thus, the spring
5 characteristics of the band 2, the hook 3 and bezel 4 all cooperate to provide adequate latching together of the two ends of the jewelry piece.

The bezel of the present invention can be formed in a number of ways. For example, a lost wax casting method
10 can be employed using a hollow or tubular sprue that matches the inside and outside diameters of the bezel. When the bezel casting is removed from the hollow or tubular sprue, it is ready for finishing without further drilling or filing.

15 Those skilled in the art will appreciate from the foregoing that various modifications to the preferred embodiment disclosed can be made without deviating from the invention. Thus, the following claims are provided to define the scope of the invention.

20 What is claimed is: